

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, I also rise today to recognize the great democratic Jewish State of Israel, one of our strongest partners for peace and stability, for its 66 years of independence.

Since its founding on May 14, 1948, Israel has been a beacon of democracy and prosperity and America's stalwart ally in the often tumultuous Middle East.

As the historic home of the Jewish people, Israel has stood for hope in the face of persecution, freedom from oppression, and opportunity for its diverse population.

We were the first nation to recognize Israel's independence, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to continue building stronger bonds between the United States and Israel.

I am fully committed to our special relationship, which is based upon our shared values and common interests. Mr. Speaker, on this joyous day, I am honored to congratulate Israel on its 66th Independence Day.

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

(Mr. TONKO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, May is Mental Health Month, a month where we step up our efforts to raise awareness for mental health and work to remove the stigma of seeking help for mental illness.

This issue is very close to my heart, as I worked in the New York State Assembly to pass Timothy's Law, which provides parity in mental health coverage in my home State.

We work in a very divided environment here, Mr. Speaker, in Washington, but one of the few things I believe we can all agree on is the need to focus more on individuals and families that struggle with mental illness. That means providing better resources, more robust programs, enhanced coordination, and a more comprehensive mental health national program.

Mental illness affects all ages, all races, tax brackets, and political ideologies, and our response to mental illness must be as comprehensive as the group of people it affects. We can only do this by joining together, reflecting in our budget our commitment to overcoming the challenges mental illnesses pose, and passing the Strengthening Mental Health in Our Communities Act, legislation that my colleagues and I introduced just today.

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IN MEMORY OF JAMES OBERSTAR

(Ms. BROWN of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, as I rise today, I am terribly, terribly

saddened by the news of the passing of my very close friend and former colleague, Congressman James Oberstar. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family, Jean, his children, and grandchildren.

Mr. Oberstar was a true "transportation guru." There was no one in Washington and most likely in the entire world who knew more about transportation than Chairman Oberstar. And he could tell you about it in several different languages.

For 36 years, Congressman Oberstar served the people of Minnesota's Eighth. I traveled on many codels with Mr. Oberstar, including a trip to Haiti, where he taught English there at the U.S. Embassy early in his career. I remember being so impressed not just by the amount of knowledge he had about Haiti, its history, politics, and infrastructure, but that he spoke French as well as in Haitian.

In closing, I take from the Bible: Mr. Oberstar has fought a good fight, he has run the race, he has finished his work, he has done a great job. God has blessed America by giving us Mr. James Oberstar.

HONORING ISRAEL'S 66TH INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DESANTIS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. FRANKEL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Mr. Speaker, tonight's Special Order is meant to honor Israel's 66th Independence Day. Last year, I also had the honor of leading a similar Special Order.

Much is made about the contention in the United States Congress. Therefore, it pleases me to say that the security of Israel remains bipartisan in every aspect. I have a number of Members with us tonight who I will yield my time to to celebrate this wonderful occasion.

First, I yield to the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE), my colleague, a distinguished member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for yielding, and I thank the gentlelady for her passionate support of the State of Israel. It has been an honor to serve with you on the Foreign Affairs Committee and to be an active member of the Jewish Caucus here in the House.

I rise today to celebrate 66 years of independence by the State of Israel and

66 years of lasting friendship between our two nations.

On May 14, 1948, under the leadership of future Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion, Jewish leaders established the State of Israel. At that time, President Harry Truman recognized the new state and sent a strong message to countries throughout the Middle East and the world that Israel would not face its future challenges alone.

Since that time, Israel has thrived and become a strong democracy. Today, our two nations remain closely aligned as a result of our shared values and common interests. During these 66 years Israel has overcome many difficult challenges and the continued existence of a Jewish state is a testament to the will and strength of the people of Israel.

As we reflect on the achievements of this great country, we must also remember its modern beginnings. Israel was established as a safe haven for the Jewish people who survived centuries of persecution and oppression.

Today, the people of Israel continue to face many threats to their way of life and to their country. There are those who believe violence is the solution to resolving their differences with the State of Israel.

But to promote security throughout this region, what the Middle East really needs is stability and peace. I want to take a moment to commend our President, President Obama, and Secretary of State John Kerry for their commitment to securing a lasting peace and their work toward achieving that goal.

On the 66th anniversary of the establishment of Israel, we strongly affirm our commitment to Israel as both a friend and ally, and double down on our efforts to bring peace to this region of the world. As President Truman so eloquently noted: Israel has "a glorious future before it, not just as another sovereign nation, but as an embodiment of the great ideals of our civilization."

I know we have all had the opportunity to visit Israel and to see firsthand the success of this democracy and the prosperity of this country surviving and thriving in a very difficult neighborhood. It has been a great honor to be here in Congress and to continue to support the relationship between our two great countries, but to really honor the success of 66 years of independence of a country that shares our values, that continues to be an example to the world of a great democracy.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. I thank the gentleman from Rhode Island for your articulate and passionate remarks.

Now it gives me great pleasure to yield to the very distinguished gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS), another colleague of mine on the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership and